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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE MEETING-HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED

Q U A K E R S,

PETER'S-COURT, St. MARTIN'S-LANE,

On the LORD'S-DAY-EVENING, July 25th, 1796,

By Mr. WILLIAM SAVERY, *W*
OF NORTH AMERICA.

Taken in Short-Hand by JOB SIBLY.

L O N D O N :

SOLD BY J. AND M. SIBLY, GOSWELL-STREET; J. PARSONS,
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PRICE SIXPENCE.

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PETER'S COURT, ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

On the Lord's Day Evening, January 11, 1863.

BY MR. WILLIAM SAVERY,

OF NORTH STREET,

THE REV. J. G. COLE, JOHNSON.

LONDON.

SOLE BY J. AND M. GIBBY, CORNHILL STREET; J. GIBBY, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND M. GIBBY, NO. 19, ADELPHI LANE, PATERNOSTER.

(Entered at Stationer's Hall)

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THE present is an age of many uncommon events, and the curious observer will not be inattentive to what they tend; and indeed many are filled with conjectures where these things will end. It is a day also, wherein men of science have been exceedingly curious in their researches; they have brought up some new and before unheard of things to view: and probably some of them may be turned to advantage to their country, in ages to come, though they are not now altogether usefully employed in the world.

But I have been thinking, my friends, of one Science worth them all; for if men were even to possess the power of counting all the luminaries of heaven, and to measure the magnitude of all the heavenly bodies, even of those that lay beyond the reach of the present observers; if they knew all the hidden arcana of nature, what would it avail, if they were destitute of the knowledge of God and themselves?

*Know ye not your own selves *?*

So said the Apostle. A great lesson: One of a later time had this reflection upon it,

"Man know thyself, enough for man to know."

Now I conceive, my friends, here is a wide field unexplained by many; and wherein I am convinced the richest

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treasure

• 2 Corinthians, xiii. 5.

treasure is to be found; the most worthy of all knowledge; viz. the knowledge of God and ourselves. Yea "to know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, is life eternal." Jesus the Son and Sent of God. Well, my friends, there is no doubt but that there are a number present, who at times have been employed in this most important and serious enquiry. But there are many men who can spend day after day, and year after year in labour and search almost indefatigable, without being weary, in things that concern only this short and uncertain state of being; who are not patient enough, to devote the same time, the same attention, the same dedication of their faculties and powers which God has given them to the most important and enriching of all sciences.

And this is, my friends, what I have been lamenting both in my own country and in this. For I believe, as surely as the great Creator and Ruler of the universe has granted us powers and talents, for the most glorious and dignified purposes, so, I believe, that one day all men will be brought to an account of their stewardship. The infidel in time of health smiles at this! "But, (this I acknowledge) though men may live fools, yet fools they cannot die." Men, while they are diverting themselves, in the passing enjoyments of the present life, however vain and little, and below the dignity of their nature; may be so amused, and suffer them so to take up their faculties and powers, that they may never be in a capacity to think, and feel sufficiently after the most solid and important thing. Certainly, my friends, this is a cause of sorrow to every thinking mind; and I know that it is, and ever must be, a cause of real affliction to every gospel minister; who believes in the sacred and
 unchangeable

unchangeable truths which have every confirmation, that reasonable minds could dare to ask, or that was necessary for the wise and beneficent God to give. (this is my faith) Thus ministers, I am persuaded, under every name, professing Christianity, must behold with sorrow their fellow pilgrims travelling towards an endless eternity; involved in things below, and unfit for those that they ought to be employed in, laying up a foundation against the time to come; that so they may lay hold of eternal Life. For I conceive there are very few, perhaps none at all, that could entertain a belief that they are not immortal.

“ If Man is not immortal, God’s unjust.”

so said one, a pious writer, “ to send him in this world in the condition that we see him, even in his best estate.” For verily, as said one of the ancient Scripture writers, “ Every man in his best estate is vanity,” take him in whatsoever condition of life you may. Those that are in the enjoyment of so much of this world’s goods that they can compass every pleasure (falsely so called) that the world and all its auxiliaries can give, know they no moments of sadness? my persuasion is they have many. A man of *pleasure* is a man of *pain*: this may appear a paradox, but it is no more than true. Those that are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, are in every condition of human life, men of pain. The infirmity of a man’s body the spirit of a man can bear, but a wounded spirit, who can bear? There are many who can support with much fortitude and patience, lingering pain of body; they can meet death with some apparent degree of composure and fortitude, provided always that the sting of death be drawn, not else; if a man is in his rational understanding. For the common infirmities of a

man, the spirit of a man can bear; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?

Well, my friends, it is in great mercy that the Lord wounds us: it is not thou that woundest thyself. An house divided against itself can never stand. Dost thou thine own self condemn thyself? No: it is as clear as any axiom in Euclid; it cannot be, it is impossible; an house divided against itself can never stand. What is it that condemns, what is it that disquiets, what is it that unsettles and confuses the mind of those that have been guilty of enormous crimes? What is it that causes the murderer to fly from country to country, and find no resting place for the sole of his feet; no bed soft enough for him to repose upon? I say it is *Conscience*. What is CONSCIENCE? The voice of God, I say, in thy soul: this is conscience.—The same voice that called to Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of his Creator; “Adam, where art thou?” Adam was weak enough to conceive he could conceal himself from Him that had even made the earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters! “Adam, where art thou?” Why he knew that he had transgressed the command of God, and he was afraid: “I heard thy voice, and was afraid.” Well, so may every sinner, great, or little; and know this is the cause of their fears: “I heard thy voice and was afraid.” It is in vain, I conceive for men to talk of the principles of their education; those things are as women’s tales; they are old as the creation of the world we live in; and will remain, I believe, until the firmament shall be dissolved as with fervent heat, and earth, and all that are therein again dissolve. This is my faith: and all the wise, and all the good have borne testimony similar to this; that have written, and that have

have spoken in the various ages of mankind; they have borne testimony to the Law of God written in their hearts. How futile, how weak for men to talk of divisions and subdivisions in these things! to speak of natural conscience; and the same futility in their arguments, in their lessons, and in those convulsions that there are when we see the great, awful and tremendous works of God that appear in the earth; to say it is Nature!—

How futile, for men not to look up through nature to nature's God, to confuse and confound themselves and one another. This is my faith, and I do not want you to receive it any further than it may coincide with the best light and knowledge which God in his mercy has granted you, I do not want you to pin your faith upon mine. No: we seek not man's silver, nor gold, nor applause, nor any thing that is their's: we call not the people together to amuse them with fine words, and fine speeches, but with that philanthropy which ever ought and ever must accompany the mind of a true gospel minister; and will induce him (if he has really been benefited by the knowledge of God himself) to desire with ardor of soul that all men may come to the same experience. I have reason to say, God be thanked for me, who was in darkness as thick as any of my contemporaries, concerning God, and the things of God, swallowed up in inticing pleasures, and vanities of this life, as much as many of you, and perhaps most of you, and as far from the knowledge of that peace which passes all natural reason and understanding of men, as any could be. Thanks be to God, who is wise, who never leaves any of us in this state, without compunction of soul, from season to season: who follows us in the night revels, who follows us
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into the halls of licentiousness, who follows us in the midst of our gay career with our companions, and wounds our most joyful scenes—this I am clear of: so that in the midst of laughter I can freely acknowledge, I have been still sad—because my heart was sad. “I heard thy voice and was afraid.”

Well; my friends, there is a great deal said about religion in the world; men have (shall I say) hewn out a variety of systems, that have been strong in their inventions, and various in the powers which God has given them, to reason upon, each one upon their own system. It is not systems nor opinions—It is neither high church nor low church that I am speaking about now. There is but one true and living church, the whole world over. Men may call themselves what they please: the world calls me a *Quaker*—and thee a *Dissenter* in another form—and thee a member of the *Established Church*—But what is all this? My friends, these are names, they are distinctions amongst men: but are they distinctions with God? Does he know *high church*, and *low church*? Does he descend to enquire whether thou art a *Methodist* or a *Presbyterian*, thou a *Baptist*, thou a *Roman Catholic*? No! But is thy *heart* right? Art thou sincere in thy desires to know him and to serve him? This is the great point: to know him, and to know thine ownself; the situation in which he has placed thee, who is the Author of thy being; the reason he has given to thee that *Being*, and the glory which he proposes to crown it with, if thou wilt with simplicity of heart live in his counsel, and in his fear, and avoid those things that are repugnant to God's purity, with a pure and truly enlightened mind. Men have too long been tossed about those things, I am persuaded of it; and a day

day, I am glad to hope is speedily advancing, when there shall be little heard of it in the world. The sword of persecution is in a great measure (through the Lord's mercy) staid; and yet there is room for it to be more closely sheathed. I believe men are coming back to think for themselves; to feel for themselves, as they ought to do; to enquire after the truth; not of leaders of sects or parties, and of men appointed for to lead them in a certain way—but to enquire after it wisely—independant one upon another—and dependant only, in this point, upon God, the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge. (This is my belief).

So that, my friends, as I said before, I am not come among you to gather you to *my* party; but that all men may become so inquisitive for themselves, that they may be joined to GOD and CHRIST in their part. For there are, I am persuaded in my own experience, men that I have found both in this country and in my own country, (where all men are free to profess and believe whatever they please, as to opinions of religion) I say there are those among the various professors, whom I can embrace as children of one great and universal Parent, in the truth, as it is in Jesus.

So that it cannot be—it would be contrary to charity that I should seem to be, bigoted to any party upon earth; but I want that all men should search and see for themselves! “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh unto you as he did in the primitive ages to the primitive believers. He was known of the patriarchs; He was known of the prophets; He was known of the apostles; they knew that He was in them; they knew His power created all things; they knew He filled all things; “He is not far (says the learned Paul) from any of you, for in Him ye live,
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move, and have your being." But He perceived the learned Athenians, who were exceeding wise in their day, he perceived that when he passed by their altar how dark they were in the most essential of all sciences. "For (says he) I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious;" for as I passed by your altar, I saw this inscription upon it—"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD"—and "that God, whom ye ignorantly worship, declare I unto you." This was the business of the apostle amongst both Jew, and Gentile; they were not ashamed to confess their opinion, yea even in the Athenian courts among the great philosophers. Yea many philosophers, even before the coming of Jesus Christ in the world, declared to the same divine principle, that I believe would unite all men in the ground and bottom of one substantial ever-enduring felicity.—They declared (we may read divers of them)—they spoke of the Divinity that there was ONE that enlightened their minds to know good from evil, and that inspired them to do things that were worthy of their dignity as men and immortals.—They frequently testified to that holy principle, which, after all, is the ground-work of all religion in every sort of people; even in idolatrous nations. For JESUS CHRIST came not partially to enlighten one, and no other part: He was "The Word that was in the beginning; that was with God, and that was God"—and that was afterwards made flesh, according to the will of the father, who could as easily have sent him in that body to every corner of the world (we may readily suppose) and a thousand times more so to natural conceptions, for all things are easy to him as the Creator of the world, and all things that are therein. But I say he came to enlighten the world with a greater degree of light than ever was before—to bring light and immortality

tality more abundantly to life in the world. And a great and especial favour I account it to be. And I believe the more we are acquainted with the Scriptures, the more we shall all be made to acknowledge, they are a special favour of God to mankind: containing, in the simplicity of their doctrine, the most deep and heavenly mysteries; and sublime beyond all the writings of any philosophers in the world, be they ever so great; or any that are called divines: yea, they are simply, and virtually in their doctrines, truly sublime beyond all the soaring opinions of men! I want the present generation therefore to read for themselves. Search the Scriptures for yourselves: let no man come unto you, and say, "I have studied them for many years—I have seen them in many languages—and I can instruct you better than you can be otherwise instructed;" for depend upon it, they have some end to answer, let them come and say what they may. Because the same eternal Spirit that gave all the mysteries that ever were revealed to mankind, to the prophets or the apostles, or any of the ministers whatever, remains to be resorted to this day, the same as in that day; and the same eternal Spirit must open the Scriptures that gave them: for nothing inferior to the power that gave the glorious and blessed doctrine of the New Testament, can reveal and open them to thy understanding and mine; not all the men of science in the world, I am persuaded: for we see it really and truly fulfilled, the Lord has confounded the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nought the understanding of the prudent, when they have meddled with these things. One saying, this is the true interpretation; and another saying, that is the true interpretation; and another saying as it were, I am wiser than thou. Oh, what confusion has

happened amongst the poor professors of Christianity, wherever this has been the case ! Now here are some with the Scriptures in their hands (and, indeed, there is one got over into my nation, where I live, that is leading the people by the ear, with the Scripture in his hand, endeavouring to prove things diametrically inconsistent with the very book that he holds forth !) My friends, how is it, or where shall we find TRUTH ? I see the people are scattered exceedingly by it ; some run for a season after one man, and they say, “ This is the man ; and now (say they) I have found him ; I never heard one before like this man : ” and in a few months (they being unstable as water), they are cast another way :—and then another comes and says abundance of fine things, who is very learned and very elegant, and they say, “ This man is come to this place, we will go and hear him.” Alas, alas ! how this is descending from the dignity in which we were created, and from the resource which God has granted ; for “ God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all ; ” he is the light of the world, and the life of men ; the light that has enlightened, and will enlighten, every man and woman that cometh into the world.” So that the prophets before the coming of Jesus Christ, could say in confidence, beholding the glorious days in which we live, and which some of them desired to see, for many prophets and righteous men have desired to see one of these days which ye see, but could not ; yet with an eye of faith they beheld it afar off : “ Abraham saw my day (says Christ) and rejoiced : ” Why, how could Abraham see his day, but through the shining of that glorious light which gave him to see the things which God, in the riches of his

his mercy and wisdom, was designing to do in the earth? This is the spirit of prophecy.

Well, my friends, have we all received a measure of this light? "If any man says that he has not the spirit of Christ, then he is none of his. That which is to be known of God is manifested in man," says the apostle.

How plain, how simple are these doctrines! Is it any wonder that the prophets and the apostles, who were inspired of God, should speak in this manner of the gospel day: That we have no need that any man teach us—that "we have no need that any man should say to his brother, or to his neighbour, know thou the Lord; for all men shall know HIM from the least to the greatest of them." For "I will write my law in their hearts, I will place it in their inward parts; they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

Now this is the doctrine, my friends, which the apostles preached—and it is the faith which we contend for. We have no new doctrine to preach unto the world, but the same that has passed the test of many ages, the same that the holy men of God continued to declare both before and after the apostles, and that has been confirmed throughout all the Scripture. This is the faith that the apostle spoke of, when he made mention what faith it was that he contended for. He said he had no need to say, "who shall ascend up into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from thence, or who shall descend into the depth, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: and this is the

word of faith that we preach;" and no other word of faith can ever be preached consistent with the gospel of Christ; and this adhered to, my friends, would be sufficient to reconcile all the contradictory differences that are in the world. They would be taught one and the same thing—it would put an end to all evil censuring one another. It would put an end to all persecutions; to all prejudices one against another; to all boasting one against another, as though I was more holy than thou; as if my system was better than thine, and I was nearer the kingdom of heaven than thou art—all being taught of this divine, eternal, all-sufficient WORD. The people would speak the same language: this I am persuaded of. But while they remain to be in the manner that many are, saying, "I am for Paul, I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," and are not willing to be gathered to be of Christ—for, as said the apostle, "Was Paul crucified for you?—Is Christ divided?" Can there be any divisions in his church? No; I conceive not. There can be no rents and schisms; Christ and his church being united, they are one in him. And where they are one in him, a glorious and blessed unity will subsist, for "one is your master, and all ye are brethren."—Then there would be no contention for superiority in the church: no such thing; it would be impossible. For if any one of you would be the greatest of all, let him become the servant of all. This would be the way to be great in the church of Christ. For it remains to be the same now that it was in the days of Christ's flesh; the way to be the greatest is to be the most humble; to be the most virtuous; to be full of love and charity towards our fellow-creatures and our fellow-

fellow-probationers. I say, this is the only true way to seek dignity in the Church. There would be no aspiring after great places and employments in it. Though I have charity to believe that even some who have been called dignitaries of the Church (for indeed the Lord bears with many of our weaknesses and infirmities) have been zealous and honest contenders for the Faith, as far as it pleased HIM to enlighten them. But I am confident of this in my mind, that the day is hastening, wherein there will be one Shepherd, and one Sheepfold, the whole world over. For this is the true nature of the gospel dispensation. But, oh, alas! what does it appear to be in this day?—How different from the primitive state, when it was declared, that, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*” Well, look over Christendom at this day: Does the Mahometan behold our light as it shines? When they take the Testament in their own hands, they are as wise to discern as we are; they are men of the same powers, and possess the same faculties to compare things as we do. Well, what would an honest Mahometan say? “Thou endeavourest to convert me to be a Christian: but for what purpose? Are the Christians wiser—Are they better—Are they more virtuous than an honest Mussulman? Give me an instance of it. Do they love one another better than the Mahometans?”

Well, my friends, do not be afraid of this inquiry, it is the way to truth; it is the way we must examine things; and, as I said before, it is a day of inquiry: let us not be afraid of enquiry. Men have been afraid of bringing things to the test. But I believe it will not be sufficient to
 think

think so long: and I invite you that are men of freedom, of independent minds, search for the truth for yourselves. Let no man lead you in those things which God is sufficient to direct and lead you into himself, who is the Fountain of all wisdom and knowledge; who has given thee powers and faculties to discern thy way, and to judge what he has called thee into existence for; what is thy business in thy passing through the present transient state of being, so that thou mayest inherit eternal life.

O Christendom! thou oughtest to be a light to enlighten the Heathen, and a glory; aye, the glory of God, to the ends of the earth! How they must look upon us! For even the Mahometans, having the New Testament in their hands, how must they stand amazed, when they come to compare these things with that our great Leader said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, because ye love one another." And are there any people more at discord?—Are there any more at variance either in a private or in a public national capacity?—O! how this has wounded me!—bear with me, my friends, I do not wish to hurt any mind present by any means whatever. If thou thinkest not as I think, thou wilt not be judged by my conscience; but by the light thou hast received thyself. And if thine heart condemn thee not, then wilt thou have faith and hope towards God; and I condemn thee not neither: but while we are endeavouring to seek after truth, do not let us be afraid of coming to the knowledge of it.

But, my friends, let us see whereabouts we are—If the foundation of God stands where it used to be; whether

we are really upon the same unchangeable foundation which the apostles were? And if we are, then we may be in the same glorious and holy confidence which they were; we may rejoice with a hope that will not fail us in the hour of death; and that we shall receive a crown of immortality, if we are building as they built; and if we are adhering to the same ground of faith which they did. Well then, some may say, they have examined these things. It will not do us any hurt to examine them over and over again. TRUTH is precious, and no matter how much time is spent in investigating of it. For, sure I am, if the gospel spirit had been continued to this day, thousands and ten thousands that have fell in the field of battle would not have died in that way, and the carnage and devastation that desolated so many parts of Europe would have been prevented. O the cry of the widows and the tender Orphans in the several countries of Europe! Ought this to have been? Or would it ever have been, if men had kept to the principle which taught them not only to love their brethren, but to love their enemies: to do good to them that persecuted them, and that despitefully used them; that so they might be the children of their heavenly Father, who causeth the rain to descend, and the sun to shine, both upon the just and the unjust.

“Why (some may say), Do not talk of things impossible. Is it possible for a man to be brought into such a condition, as not to revenge injuries and insults?” I believe it is; and that it is the disposition that every Christian ought to be brought into—not to revenge injuries and insults, but to bear them with patience.

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Some may here say, "What wouldst thou have us to be towards?" No; but *heroes* in the LAMB's army. And who is there that needs be ashamed to be in the LAMB's army, to gain the victory? It would be a thousand times more magnanimous indeed to put up with little injuries, one with another, than to resent them in anger; it shows a low and little mind to do that; great minds are above it. And the Christian sees a state exalted far beyond this, and that we are even called to it, the very form of our prayer testifies: "If thou forgivest not those that trespass against thee, (our blessed Lord said) neither will thy Father which is in heaven forgive thee." These are solid and unshaken Truths, that all the sophistry of men will never be able to invalidate.—"*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*"—Who then can say this prayer, and still continue in a spirit of revenge; and say to his brother, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; thou hast injured me, and I will injure thee? Well, then those ought to be careful upon what terms they lay their salvation; for the Lord is here prescribing the very terms in his excellent prayer, "*Forgive us our trespasses, only as we forgive them that trespass against us*:" this is the true meaning of the prayer. No further prayest thou when thou usest the prayer given by our blessed Lord himself. But, my friends, though I do not want to enlarge a great deal, I want to see the peaceable standard of righteousness, both in this nation and in all the nations of the earth; and that the spirit of persecution and destroying of one another might be entirely done away, by all being brought down into the meek spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ; and be, in some measure, as he was, who when

he was persecuted even to death on the cross. (O how meekly he bore it for our sake!—And shall we not bear with one another? I trust all will confess we ought to do.) He said in the depth of his agony, “Father forgive them:” though he could have called down legions of Angels to those corrupt and wicked men; yet he said in meekness (which I believe many have partook of, in a measure, since this day) “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And the next martyr, Stephen, when he was brought to the gates of the city, and was stoned to death, he followed his Lord in the same disposition; he kneeled down when in the midst of them, and said, “Lord lay not this sin to their charge.” Having lifted up his eyes to heaven, and petitioned his Saviour to receive his soul, he at last said, “Lord lay not this sin to their charge:” and so saying, he fell asleep, in the arms, no doubt, of his glorious Lord and Master, whom he followed even to death.

Now, my friends, there is no new law; there is no new dispensation. Many of the martyrs were of the same faith, which they had attained through God’s mercy, and the influence of his Spirit upon theirs; and the same disposition of mind also. So that when they were led forth in the days of persecution, which the church was persecuted with, O how meek did some of them deliver up their souls to God, and their bodies into the hands of their wretched persecutors! There were some hundreds of them fell a sacrifice for their faith and belief in God. How pious, how calm did they go out of the world! Not reviling because they were reviled: By no means. Not giving abuse for abuse, but contrariwise, blessing their persecutors. This was the condition of those, knowing (as the apostle said) they

they could not be troubled by them. 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were therunto called, that they might also inherit a blessing.

Well, my friends, these are so many monuments of God's adorable mercy and power: and the same God reigneth over all in this day; and he is as able to support us in the faith once delivered to the Saints, as he was in that day: and I trust those that are earnestly concerned to inquire after it, will know it to their comfort, without the aid or assistance of any man whatever. God is as sufficient for these things now as he was in all the generations that are past. It only wants application of mind—Serious solemn meditation, and contemplation upon the things of God; then all would know the Truth, and abiding in it, they would all be made preachers of Righteousness in their several situations in the world. Aye, one of those that was persecuted, when she was brought before her persecutors to answer for her faith, was nevertheless furnished with that wisdom which confounded the wisdom of the wise that was amongst her persecutors; so that they thought she had answered wiser than them all. And a certain little maid, when many were brought forth to the stake, was brought before her persecutors, they said to her, "And what can you say, my little maid, for your faith?" Why, said she, "I am not able to contend for CHRIST; but I am able to do more: I am able to suffer for Christ." Now, my friends, I am persuaded this would be the condition of all of us; by inward, solid, reverent inquiry after it. Then you would not be astonished to see people sit down in silence, either in their own houses, or in the Assembly of God's people; so that God would condescend to be with them, and enlighten their minds. For "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask

of

of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth none." O may the God of all mercy, wisdom, and power, hasten this day ; enlarge the love of professors of Christianity one towards another : throw down all the walls of opposition, which were built up in the day of departure from the fountain of living water ; and bring us again to drink at Shiloh's stream ; that all the heritage may drink at the fountain itself ; and the world once more rejoice in knowing him to reign and to rule over all ; whose right it is, and ever will remain.



T H E E N D.

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